The Department of Music

of

The University of Alberta

presents a lecture

THE LEGENDARY SORABJI, MONSTRUM MUSICUM

by

PAUL RAPOPORT

Monday, October 20, 1975, at 8:00 p.m.

Room 1-23, Fine Arts Centre

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, writer, pianist, composer, gained a reputation in England in the 1920's and 30's as an extraordinarily irascible critic and a fabulous pianist of staggering virtuosity and power. Many of his major compositions (from about 1913 to the present) are of such length and difficulty as to defy performance, making almost unnecessary the ban on public performance of his works which he decreed 40 years ago.

Nonetheless, most of Sorabji's compositions are available for study. In addition to being a general introduction to Sorabji, his music, and his world, this lecture will discuss his last published work, Opus clavicembalisticum, written in 1930. Computer-assisted realizations of parts of it will be played, with some mention made of how these were achieved.

Opus clavicembalisticum, Sorabji's most famous work, is a 252-page, chiefly contrapuntal creation for piano solo that lasts nearly 3 hours, containing, among much else, a passacaglia with 81 variations, and a quadruple fugue of about 40 minutes' duration. It has been played in its entirety only once--by Sorabji.

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Compositions by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji.

TITLE	COMPOSED	PUBLISHED	PAGES	COMMENTS
	FOR PIANO SOLO:			
Two piano pieces		1921		
In the hothouse	1918		8	
Toccata	1920		12	
Fantaisie espagnole	1919	1922	31	
Sonata no. 1	1919	1921	42	
Sonata no. 2	1920	1923	63	dedication: Busoni
Prelude interlude and fugue	1920, 22?	1924	17	
Three pastiches	1922			
on Chopin's Valse op. 64 no. 1		1969	16	
on Bizet's "Habanera"				
on Rimsky-Korsakov's "Hindu song"				
Sonata no. 3	1922	1925	78	
Variations and fugue	1922			64 vrns and fugue on Dies irae
Le jardin parfumé	1923	1927	36	"Poem for piano"
Valse-fantaisie	1925	1927	35	"Hommage à Johann Strauss"
Fragment	1926, rev 1937		2	for Harold Rutland
Toccata no. 1	1928		66	
Jāmī	1928		28	
Sonata no. 4	1928-9		111	
Opus clavicembalisticum	1930	1931	252	ded: Hugh MacDiarmid
Fantasia ispanica	1933		54	
Pasticcio capriccioso on Chopin's Valse op. 64 no. 1	1933		8	
Toccata no. 2	1933-4		111	prob the last work S played in public (Glasgow, 1936)
Sonata no. 5	1934-5		344	"Opus archimagicum" ded: Clinton Gray-Fisk
Tantrik symphony	1938-9		284	
Transcription of Bach's Chromatic fantasy plus a new fugue	1940		15	
Quaere reliqua hujus materia inter secretiora	1940		16	
"He was laughing in the tower"	1941		16	title from St Bertrand de Comminges
Gulistan	1940		28	title from Sa'dī
100 transcendental studies	1940-4		456	
Concerto per suonare da me solo	1946		70	
Sequentia cyclica	1949		343	27 parts based on Dies irae. ded: Egon Petri
Symphony no. 2	1954		248	

TITLE	COMPOSED	PUBLISHED	PAGES	COMMENTS
Passeggiata veneziana	1956			based on Offenbach's Hoffmann "Barcarole"
Toccata no. 3	1957?			written before 1962
Symphony no. 3	1960			
Symphony no. 4	1962-4		242	
Frammenti aforistici	1962+			
Toccata no. 4	1964-7		149	based on the name Frank Holliday
Symphonia brevis	1973-4		100+	
Symphonia magna	1975+			
FOR ORGAN SOLO:				
Symphony no. 1	1924	1925	105	org of 4-5 manuals
Symphony no. 2	1929-32		350	
Symphony no. 3	1949-53		301	
FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA:				
Concerto no. 1	1913, rev 1918			1st version probably destroyed
Concerto no. 2	1920	1923	144	ded: Alfred Cortôt
Concerto no. 3	1924			"Simorg-Anka". for small orchestra
Concerto no. 4				
Concerto no. 5	1927-8		343	
Symphonic variations	1935-7,51		484	
Opus clavisymphonicum	1957-9		ca 300	ded: John Ireland
Opusculum claviorchestrale	1974-5		334	
FOR ORCHESTRA:				
Chaleur	1920			
Symphony no. 1	1922		300	pno org chs orc
Opusculum	1923		36	
Jāmī symphony	1942-51		830	pno org chs orc. txt from Yūsuf ū Zuleykhā of Jāmī
Symphony no. 2				pno org chs orc. incomplete
Symphonic high mass	1958-61			said to require 2000+ performers
CHAMBER MUSIC:				
Quintet no. 1	1920	1923	62	pno+strs. ded: Philip Heseltine
Quintet no. 2 [title?]	1932-3		432	*pno+strs* based on the name Havelock Ellis and possibly others

SONGS:

Five sets. Most use French texts (Baudelaire, Verlaine) and are quite short. Two sets are published. Three sets are for soprano and piano, one is for baritone and piano, one for baritone and small orchestra.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sorabji: Around music (London, Unicorn press, 1932).
Mi contra fa (London, Porcupine press, 1947).
many articles and letters in the New age and New English Weekly, as well as in many other British papers and journals.

Paul Rapoport 20 Oct 1975